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Having reviewed the documents related to the settlement and being a developer
in the software industry myself, I suggest that Microsoft release the source
code for their products and nullify any existing anti-competition agreements
they have with various other companies.

One of the main obstacles to competition with Microsoft that other companies
face, and especially the open source movement, is the format of the documents
in which their programs save, particularly the Microsoft Office family of
applications.  Because Microsoft solely controls the formats of these files,
it is nearly impossible to write a program that can read these files.  Many
businesses are therefore reluctant to switch over to an alternative office
suite than Microsoft Office because they use programs such as Word and
Powerpoint that save in formats that can not be imported into other programs.
 Because they have literally volumes of information locked in these closed
format files, they are locked into perpetually using Microsoft Office as
their office suite.  In addition, the file formats that these programs use
are moving targets -- that is, with every new release of Microsoft Office,
Microsoft changes the file format, which has the effect of breaking various
legally reverse-engineered import filters, such as used by AbiWord.  If
Microsoft were to release the format of these files, it would be possible to
create an import function in competing products that would allow true
competition.  Instead of competing over which product a business has used the
most in the past, products would compete over features and ease of use, if
Microsoft would open up their file formats.

Additionally, Microsoft has entered into anti-competition agreements with
various other companies.  Although these agreements have a wide range of
effects, two of the most dangerous to the free market are forcing hardware
manufacturers to write drivers exclusively for Windows and preventing
computer manufacturers from preloading other operating systems on a same
computer that has Windows preloaded.

Forcing hardware manufacturers to write drivers exclusively for Windows hurts
the free market by locking businesses into using Windows because of the
somewhat lacking hardware support under other operating systems.  There is no
reason that hardware manufacturers can not release documentation on the
protocols that their hardware uses to interface with a computer, except for a
previously existing anti-competition agreement with Microsoft.  I remember
that when I used to buy a printer, included in the manual would be complete
documentation of the interface used by the printer to print colors and
graphics.  Now, when I buy a printer, this documentation is not to be found,

because nearly all major printer manufacturers have agreements with Microsoft that they will only use this information to produce drivers for use under Windows. Although it's true that the Foomatic project has legally reverse-engineered drivers for various printers whose manufacturers are under these agreements, the Foomatic drivers are often lacking in features that make other operating systems unattractive to owners of these printers. This is an aspect of Microsoft's monopoly that isn't merely limited to printers. I also have an MP3 player that I find more convenient to carry around than my CD player, but I need to use Windows to load music on to it, because there only exist drivers for Windows for my MP3 player. If hardware manufacturers were allowed to publish the protocols that their hardware uses, it would make competition based on merit, rather than who-knows-who.

The bootloader issue is equally important. Many users do not know how to install software on their computers, much less an entire operating system. Unfortunately, this means the most users are locked into using whatever operating system comes preloaded on their computers. It is presently uneconomical for a computer manufacturer to risk not preloading a computer with Windows simply because other operating systems have been stifled as I've pointed out above, and most users do not have the previous experience with other operating systems that would allow them to be comfortable using them. If other operating systems were preloaded along side Windows, uses could play around with them and become comfortable in their usage, to the point where competition with Microsoft would be reduced to objective measures such as speed, usability, and stability. It is uncompetitive of Microsoft to actively prevent other operating systems than Windows from getting their due market exposure.

Using myself as an example, I've found that only my ability to scrap and hack together a usable system has allowed me to get away from Windows. Unfortunately, not many other computer uses share my level of expertise, and there isn't enough of myself to help every user who is dependant on Microsoft's products switch over to alternatives.

In conclusion, the most fitting way to punish Microsoft for their anti-competitive practices is to force them to stop the very things that make them anti-competitive. To wit, Microsoft must publish the source code of their products, which includes documentation on file formats, as well as other important items that I haven't mentioned such as the NT File System used in Windows XP and API that is only available to Microsoft developers, and Microsoft must let manufacturers out of anti-competitive agreements. If Microsoft's punishment is provide any amount of free software to public schools, it will only further Microsoft's monopoly, because it will stifle price competition from operating systems such as MacOS and Linux. Additionally, forcing Microsoft to port their programs to other operating systems than Windows instead of opening up their source code will effectively do nothing, because users will still be dependant on Microsoft products. The problem of Microsoft's stifling their competition comes from their infectious closed-source policies, which spread by anti-competition agreements to other

companies, and the solution to Microsoft's monopolistic behavior must follow
in suit.  Microsoft must be forced to release all of their source code.
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"All in all it was all just the bricks in the Wall."
        -- Pink Floyd, Another Brick in the Wall, Part III
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